

Office of Attorney General Terry Goddard



STATE OF ARIZONA
DEPARTMENT OF LAW
1275 W. WASHINGTON STREET
PHOENIX, ARIZONA 85007-2926
WWW.AZAG.GOV

ANDREA M. ESQUER
PRESS SECRETARY
PHONE: (602) 542-8019
CELL PHONE: (602) 725-2200

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Attorney General's Office Transferring Cases to Avoid Ethical Conflict

(Phoenix, Ariz. -- June 12, 2007) Attorney General Terry Goddard said today his office will turn over all criminal cases involving the Maricopa County Sheriff's Office to other prosecution agencies to avoid an ethical conflict.

The action has been made necessary by the Sheriff's Office's ongoing investigation of a payment made to the Attorney General's Office last year by the State Treasurer's Office.

"We have concluded after consultation with outside counsel and ethics counsel for the State Bar of Arizona that the investigation creates an ethical conflict making it improper for my Office to continue to work on cases from the Sheriff's Office during the pendency of the investigation," Goddard said. "I cannot allow a situation to develop where a defense attorney could argue that the Sheriff's Office had some improper influence in our prosecutorial decisions."

"I take this action with regret," Goddard added. "We are making every effort to be sure that the proper prosecution of these cases is not delayed or compromised."

Fifteen criminal cases and five civil forfeiture cases are affected. The Attorney General's Office is working with several prosecution agencies to transfer the cases. One of the criminal cases, the multi-count indictment of Maricopa County Schools Superintendent Sandra Dowling, has been turned over to the U.S. Attorney's Office for the District of Arizona.

Investigations submitted to the Attorney General's Office by the Sheriff's Office that have not yet resulted in criminal charges will be returned to the Sheriff's Office for assignment to a different prosecution agency.

A copy of the letter from Goddard to Maricopa County Sheriff Joe Arpaio is attached.

###